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## The impact of multiculturalism on immigrant helping

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We examined how immigrants' acculturation style (multiculturalism versus assimilation) affects the host society's willingness to help immigrants. The results from this experiment supported our expectations in showing that multiculturalism triggered less immigrant helping than assimilation, but only among high national identifiers. In addition, immigrants pursuing multiculturalism were perceived as less warm than those pursuing assimilation, and perceived warmth mediated the interaction effect of identification and acculturation style on helping. Whereas help could improve immigrants' integration into the host society and reduce the degree to which the latter views immigrants as threatening, these results ironically demonstrate that immigrants who are viewed as most threatening receive the least amount of help.

*Key words:* assimilation, immigrant helping, multiculturalism, national identification, warmth.

Immigrants in society suffer many disadvantages compared to locals (e.g., low educational attainment, lower employment status), owing to unfamiliarity with the host society's culture or language, and little to no local social network (Constant, Kahanec & Zimmerman, 2008; Schnepf, 2007). Most see their host country as a place of opportunity for a better life and are motivated to make it work (Winch & Carment, 1989). However, they do need some assistance from the host society with their integration process. For example, the host population may help improve immigrants' education so that they can have a better chance to attain jobs in the host country's job market. But herein lies the problem: immigrants are often faced with resistance from the host society, such as through discrimination (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola & Reuter, 2006; Zick, Pettigrew & Wagner, 2008). The existing literature suggests that the host society's negative treatment of immigrants may, in part, be due to the perception that immigrants pose a threat to the host society's cultural values (e.g., González, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). But by not facilitating immigrants, the host society effectively exacerbates the problem by blocking their integration. The aim of the current research was to investigate the host society's willingness to help immigrant groups with their integration process, as affected by the degree to which immigrant groups are seen as threatening to the host society's cultural values.

Threat is conceptualized as the host society's experience that immigrant groups potentially harm the host population.

Stephan, Ybarra and Rios Morrison (2009) distinguished between symbolic threat (i.e., threat to the group's cultural values) and realistic threat (i.e., threat to economic resources). Research thus far has primarily studied the host society's responses to immigrant groups as a result of realistic threat. For example, members of the host society may feel immigrants present unwanted competition on the job market (Borjas, 1999). Consequently, the host society may be less inclined to assist immigrants with their integration. In support of this notion, Jackson and Esses (2000) observed that Canadians who perceived immigrants as a threat to their economic resources were less willing to empower immigrants, compared to Canadians who did not perceive immigrants as a threat.

Recent research suggests that negative treatment of immigrant groups may also stem from a perceived threat toward the host society's cultural values (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). The degree to which immigrants pose a threat toward the host society's cultural values is affected by their acculturation mode, which describes the process of cultural and psychological changes when two or more cultures meet (Sam & Berry, 2010). In the unidimensional model of acculturation, acculturation strategies are viewed as a continuum with multiculturalism at one end and assimilation at the other (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003). Multiculturalism is an acculturation mode in which the host population supports cultural diversity (i.e., immigrant groups are free to maintain their culture and ways of life), whereas assimilation is the host society's expectation that immigrant groups conform to the host society's culture (Berry, 2005). There is often a mismatch between the host society's acculturation strategy and that of immigrant groups. Immigrant groups tend to favour multiculturalism, because it permits them to maintain their cultural heritage, while host societies typically prefer immigrant groups to

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assimilate (Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008; van Oudenhoven, Prins & Buunk, 1998; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). The mismatch mode of acculturation may lead the host society to view immigrants as a threat (Rohmann, Florack & Piontkowski, 2006), whereby the more immigrant groups adhere to their own culture and identity, the more the host society feels threatened by them (Morrison, Plaut & Ybarra, 2010).

According to the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy & Glick, 1999), perceived warmth of a group predicts willingness to help that group (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2007, 2008). Warmth is defined as the host society's perception of the immigrant group as friendly, sincere, or trustworthy (see Cuddy *et al.*, 2007). Groups stereotyped as warm elicit more facilitative behaviours such as helping, whereas groups stereotyped as cold elicit intentions of active harm (e.g., Becker & Asbrock, 2012; Sanchez & Bonam, 2009). The degree to which another group is seen as warm, however, is affected by the extent to which the group poses a threat to one's own group. For example, González *et al.* (2008) found that the extent to which Dutch participants judged Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands as threatening to the Dutch national identity and cultural norms was inversely related to perceptions of warmth of Muslims in the Netherlands. In a similar vein, van Osch and Breugelmans (2011) found that multiculturalism initiated by Moroccan and Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands decreased perceptions of warmth of these immigrant groups. These findings demonstrate that multiculturalism can be experienced as a threat by the host society, resulting in negative perceptions of the immigrant group's warmth. Thus, it can be expected that immigrant groups endorsing multiculturalism would decrease the host society's willingness to help these groups, as compared to immigrant groups endorsing assimilation.

We further expected that the degree to which immigrants' integration strategy affects the host society's willingness to help immigrants would be moderated by national identification. Social identification refers to individuals' psychological attachment to their group or nation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (1999) argued that group memberships affect how people think, feel, and behave based on the group to which they belong. Accordingly, people who identify strongly with their country are more likely to show various group-level responses than people who identify less strongly with their country. The former are also more motivated than the latter to act in ways that defend or promote their group or nation (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999). Thus, the strength of national identification may be a pivotal determinant of the host society's evaluation of immigrants' integration strategy (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson & Armstrong, 2001) and the host society's willingness to help immigrants.

In the present study, we examined how multiculturalism affects the host society's (native Dutch) willingness to help Muslim groups (Turkish and Moroccan immigrants). Helping immigrant groups is a form of intergroup helping, in which differences in group membership between the helper and the recipient are salient (Nadler, 2002). Immigrant helping involves empowering or assisting immigrant groups to overcome the problems that they face in society (Jackson & Esses, 2000). We manipulated acculturation style by exposing participants to a passage describing Muslim immigrants' endorsement of either multiculturalism or assimilation. Previous research in the Netherlands has shown that the native Dutch view Muslim immigrant groups' endorsement of multiculturalism as a threat (e.g., Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003), especially when multiculturalism is related to the immigrants' Islamic ways of life, which the native Dutch generally perceive as morally wrong (González *et al.*, 2008). We predicted that the more the native Dutch identify with their country, the less they would be inclined to help Muslim immigrant groups when they believe they endorse a multiculturalism strategy, but not when they endorse an assimilation strategy (Hypothesis 1). We also expected that national identification among the native Dutch would be inversely related to perceptions of the immigrant groups' warmth, but only in the multiculturalism condition and not in the assimilation condition (Hypothesis 2). Furthermore, perceived warmth of Muslim immigrants was expected to mediate the effect predicted in Hypothesis 1 (Hypothesis 3).

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 57 male and female native Dutch students from the VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands, who volunteered to participate. In order to maximize anonymity (which is important given the sensitive topic of the study) no personal information of any kind, including demographic information, was recorded. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: multiculturalism or assimilation.

### Measures

All measures were assessed using five-point scales (1 = not at all, 5 = very much), and scales were created by averaging the items. *National identification* was assessed using four statements adapted from Verkuyten (2009) (e.g., 'I have a lot in common with the native Dutch', 'Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a native Dutch';  $\alpha = 0.78$ ;  $M = 3.52$ ;  $SD = 0.70$ ; *skewness* =  $-0.56$ ). *Perceived warmth* of Muslim immigrants was assessed using five traits taken from Cuddy *et al.* (2008) (i.e., good-natured, trustworthy,

tolerant, friendly, sincere;  $\alpha = 0.76$ ;  $M = 3.21$ ;  $SD = 0.60$ ;  $skewness = -0.14$ ). *Immigrant helping* was assessed using six items adapted from Esses *et al.* (2001) and Jackson and Esses (2000), which were modified to suit the Netherlands context (e.g., 'The Dutch government should help Muslim immigrants overcome the barriers they face in the problem of unemployment in the Netherlands', 'People should help Muslim immigrants to help themselves in the problem of education', 'It should be made easier for Muslim immigrants to seek jobs, because their unemployment problems are the responsibility of the Netherlands';  $\alpha = 0.79$ ;  $M = 2.88$ ;  $SD = 0.73$ ;  $skewness = -0.19$ ).

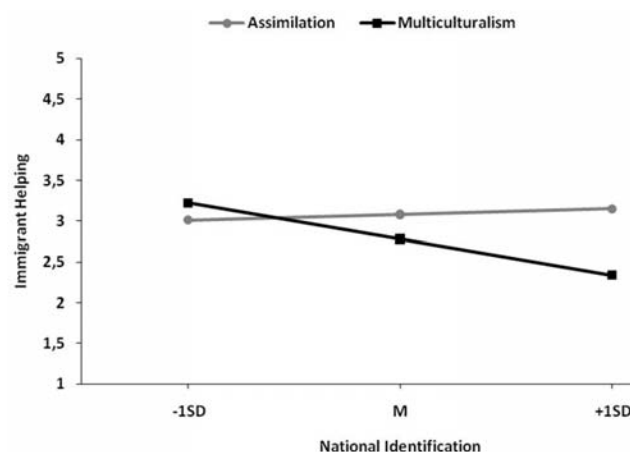
## Procedure

Participants completed a questionnaire containing our measures and manipulation. The first part of the questionnaire was a measure of *national identification*. Participants then read a passage about Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands that ostensibly stemmed from a respectable national newspaper. In the *multiculturalism* condition, the passage described the aspiration of the Muslim immigrants to have more opportunities to preserve their culture, such as the opportunity to wear typical Muslim clothing (e.g., headscarf, robe) and to conduct religious rituals both publicly and privately. In the *assimilation* condition, the passage described the willingness of the Muslim immigrants to conform to the Dutch way of life, which included their willingness to abandon their tradition clothing (e.g., headscarf, robe) and to engage in religious rituals only in private. Participants subsequently responded to measures of *perceived warmth* and *immigrant helping*. Upon finishing, participants were thanked and debriefed.

## Results

### Immigrant helping

Participants' willingness to help Muslim immigrants was analyzed in a regression analysis with Condition (coded 1 for multiculturalism and 0 for assimilation), National Identification (transformed to *z*-scores) and their interaction term as independent variables. This analysis resulted in a significant equation,  $F(3, 52) = 4.92$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ,  $R_{adj}^2 = 0.22$ . National Identification was inversely related to helping,  $\beta = -0.49$ ,  $t = -3.11$ ,  $p = 0.003$ . This effect was fully qualified by the predicted interaction term,  $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $t = 2.25$ ,  $p = 0.03$ . Simple slope analysis (see Figure 1) revealed that, as predicted in Hypothesis 1, National Identification was negatively related to helping in the multiculturalism condition,  $\beta = -0.48$ ,  $t = -2.69$ ,  $p = 0.01$ , but unrelated to helping in the assimilation condition,  $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $t = 0.51$ ,  $p = 0.62$ . These results demonstrate that the more participants identified with the Dutch, the less willing



**Figure 1** The effect of identification on immigrant helping in multiculturalism condition ( $n = 27$ ) and assimilation condition ( $n = 30$ ).

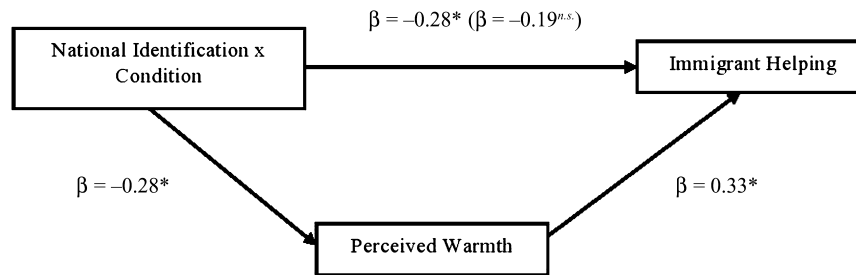
they were to help Muslim immigrants who expressed a preference for maintaining their Islamic ways of life (i.e., a preference for multiculturalism).

### Perceived warmth

We analyzed participants' perceptions of Muslim immigrants' interpersonal warmth using a regression analysis with Condition, National Identification, and their interaction term as independent variables. This analysis resulted in a significant interaction term,  $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $t = 2.51$ ,  $p = 0.02$ . Simple slope analysis revealed that, in line with Hypothesis 2, National Identification was negatively related to perceived warmth in the multiculturalism condition,  $\beta = -0.62$ ,  $t = -3.90$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , but unrelated to warmth in the assimilation condition,  $\beta = 0.01$ ,  $t = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.99$ . That is, the more participants identified with the Dutch, the less they perceived Muslim immigrants as interpersonally warm, but this effect only emerged in the multiculturalism condition where Muslim immigrants were described as aspiring to retain their Islamic ways of life.

### Mediation analysis

Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure, we examined the role of perceived warmth in mediating the interaction effect of National Identification and Condition on immigrant helping. As shown in Figure 2, the effect of perceived warmth on immigrant helping, while controlling for the interaction between National Identification and Condition, was significant. In contrast, the interaction between National Identification and Condition itself was no longer significant. A Sobel *z*-test revealed that perceived warmth mediated the direct effect of the interaction between



**Figure 2** The role of Perceived Warmth in mediating the effect of identification  $\times$  multiculturalism on immigrant helping.

Note: The  $\beta$  is a standardized regression coefficient. The path from Perceived Warmth to immigrant helping is the effect of Perceived Warmth on immigrant helping while controlling for National Identification  $\times$  Condition. The number in parenthesis is the effect of National Identification  $\times$  Condition on immigrant helping while controlling for Perceived Warmth. \* $p < 0.05$ , <sup>ns</sup> = not significant.

National Identification and Condition on immigrant helping  $z = 1.75$ ,  $p = 0.04$  (one-tailed). In line with Hypothesis 3, decreased support for immigrant helping among strongly identifying participants in the multiculturalism condition was due to their perception that Muslim immigrants advocating multiculturalism are not interpersonally warm.

## Discussion

The current study examined the impact of multiculturalism versus assimilation of Muslim immigrant groups in the Netherlands on the host population's willingness to support these immigrants. The results supported our hypothesis that national identification negatively related both to support of immigrant helping and perceived warmth of Muslim immigrants, but only when Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands were depicted as aspiring to maintain their Islamic ways of life. In addition, as expected, the extent to which the native Dutch perceived Muslim immigrants as interpersonally warm mediated the interaction effect of national identification and multiculturalism on immigrant helping.

Based on these results, we propose some practical implications. Institutions involved in the integration of immigrants should raise awareness of the possibility that immigrant helping is a means of improving immigrants' integration into society. Given that much resistance to immigrant helping stems from a lack of integration, awareness of the consequences of helping for immigrants' level of integration should increase society's willingness to assist immigrants in the integration process. In addition, policymakers in the Netherlands could focus on making immigrant groups, particularly Muslim immigrants, appear less threatening by increasing familiarity with Muslims and their way of life. Greater familiarity with Muslims could be actualized by enhancing contact between Muslim immigrants and members of the host society. Intergroup contact

has proven to reduce prejudice by enhancing knowledge about the out-group, reducing anxiety about intergroup contact, and increasing empathy and perspective-taking (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

A few limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. First, in the Netherlands, research has shown that young people and highly educated people tend to be more supportive of multiculturalism (Schalk-Soekar & van De Vijver, 2008). The effects of multiculturalism on helping as found in our study may thus be stronger among older people and those who have lower levels of education. Second, our manipulation involves Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands. As suggested by Mummendey and Wenzel (1999), negative intergroup relations (e.g., discrimination, hostility) may be due to differences between groups, especially those differences that are evaluated negatively (i.e., the Dutch perception of the immigrants' way of life as morally wrong). Thus, multiculturalism may have impeded helping in the current study in part because the Muslim immigrants' way of life may have been negatively evaluated. Consequently, it is possible that immigrant groups who are positively evaluated and who aspire to multiculturalism would generate a stronger willingness to help on the part of the host population compared to immigrants who are negatively evaluated. Future research should explore this issue.

Further research could also address a number of other issues. Subsequent research could, for example, draw more closely on Berry's (2001) two-dimensional model of acculturation, which assumes that maintenance of the heritage culture and adoption of the host society's culture are independent constructs. Since integration was found to be an acculturation strategy that resulted in the least amount of intergroup conflict in Canada (Berry, 2005), a follow-up study could verify whether integration compared to other acculturation models (i.e., assimilation, separation, marginalization) cross-culturally elicits the most favourable



perceptions (warmth) and behaviours (helping). It would also be interesting to study the perspectives of Muslim immigrant groups in receiving help from host societies. This can be potentially challenging because a history of intergroup conflict could lead immigrant groups to interpret help not as an act of kindness but as an attempt to exert power (Nadler, Harpaz-Gorodeisky & Ben-David, 2009).

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